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MUSEUM & SCHOOL OF ART COMMITTEE.

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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

MR. JOHN THACKRAY BUNCE,

*Chairman of the Management Sub-Committee,*

AT THE

DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES TO STUDENTS OF THE  
BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART,

ON THE

17th of FEBRUARY, 1892.









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MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I am here to-night in the humble capacity of a substitute or a stop-gap. It has been our custom to invite some person eminent as an artist to distribute the School Prizes, and to deliver an address. To such addresses all of us, the students especially, have listened with pleasure and profit, and if we could have had our way, the address this year would have been one of the most interesting of the series, for we had asked Mr. Holman Hunt, one of the most distinguished and most thoughtful of English painters, to deliver it, and he had provisionally consented to do so. Unfortunately, considerations of health and work obliged Mr. Holman Hunt to leave England, and he will not return for some time to come. He hopes, however, to pay us a visit on a future occasion. Mr. Walter Crane, who has taken much interest in our School, and who once was kind enough to act as examiner for our local Prizes, was also invited to attend this evening; but he is away in the United States. Being thus disappointed, we felt that it would not be proper, on such short notice, to ask any other persons eminent in Art, and having consequently to rely upon our own local resources, my colleagues on the Museum and School of Art Committee have done me the honour of entrusting to my hands the performance of a duty which I should gladly have devolved upon some other member of our body, for while very willing to give time and labour to the administration of the Art Gallery and the School, I have always been reluctant to make any



public appearance as a speaker, and particularly so on an occasion which, like the present, is to us the most important of the School year. However, having undertaken the duty, I will endeavour to make the discharge of it as little tedious to you as may be possible.

It is thought desirable that advantage should be taken of this opportunity to put the work of the School of Art clearly before the town, and to show, broadly, not only what we are doing in the School itself, but how, by our relations with other educational institutions, we are endeavouring, with earnestness, by systematic methods, and I hope and believe with success, to influence, to develop, to strengthen, and to guide the Art education, and consequently the Art life of Birmingham.

I do not propose to weary you by the citation of an array of statistics. Those who care for that form of entertainment will find it abundantly set forth in the coldly furnished tables of the Committee's reports. But the mention of a few facts is necessary in order to the right understanding of the magnitude and variety of our work. The great Central School is manifest to everyone; the whole town knows it; visitors know it; and those who see the building and recognise its uses, are aware generally that it is filled with students—so filled, indeed, that it is now in process of an enlargement which will double the space available for teaching, and will enable the masters to take in hand many subjects now omitted for want of room, or only imperfectly dealt with. I could wish, in regard to the Central School, that it were possible once in a way to remove the front, and to show the school in action, like a great industrial hive; to let the



public see the finely adapted and admirably fitted suites of rooms, from basement to top-storey, occupied morning, afternoon, and evening by students, youths and girls, men and women, of all ranks and classes, engaged busily and earnestly in the life school, in the painting room, drawing from the antique, working in the modelling rooms, designing, studying from objects of still life, executing their own designs in such processes as repoussé work, metal engraving, and etching; doing in short, all that can be done in a School of Art, from the earliest lessons in freehand and model drawing, to the production of pictures worthy, not a few of them, of being hung upon the walls of exhibition galleries. It would be most interesting and instructive thus to show, as by a striking object lesson, the attention and earnestness of the students, the devotion of the masters, the effective working of the administrative department, the swing, and vigour, and order, and progress with which the complex machine moves steadily day by day, without a moment's flagging, from the beginning of the session to the end. It would be one of the most popular sights in Birmingham, and it would be acknowledged as a spectacle of which Birmingham, or indeed any great community in the kingdom, might well be proud; one which would be recognised as evidence of artistic achievement, and as giving assured promise of industrial advancement.

But when you had examined the Central School, you would have seen only one department of the work administered by the Museum and School of Art Committee—the mainspring and, so to speak, the heart of the system—but still only one portion of it. Besides the Central School,



there are at work in other districts of the town fourteen Branch Evening Schools, also well equipped with appliances and examples, also filled with attentive students, also producing excellent work, which is telling rapidly upon the industries of the town. One of these, as most of you know, is a school of specially high quality—the Vittoria Street school, permanently established in its own building, in the jewellers' and silversmiths' quarter, and placed there, and specially organised, for the benefit of those staple trades, which depend so intimately for their progress—indeed, for their existence—upon a knowledge of Art amongst those, whether employers or artisans, who are engaged in them. The other schools are, by the kindness of the School Board, conducted in Board schools, an arrangement indispensable for the present, but which, I hope, is destined some day to be replaced by the provision of suitable buildings, belonging to the Corporation, and devoted wholly to the teaching of Art; buildings with which, perhaps, it may be possible to combine subsidiary Museums, supplied from the great collection in Congreve Street, and adapted, as far as possible, to the industrial requirements of the districts in which they may be placed.

Now, in this widely extended system of Art schools, we have a total of about 3,500 students in all, who are under the care and general direction of Mr. Taylor, as head master, with seventy-four assistant masters and mistresses, the largest staff, I believe, under any School of Art Committee in the three kingdoms; and I will venture to say, not the largest only, but also the best. You will observe that I have mentioned mistresses as well as masters. This is one of the marked features of our system. We have trained a large



number of women in our schools ; we find, by experience, that they are capable of giving intelligent and effective teaching in drawing ; and therefore, recognising their right to a free, open, and equal career, we are giving them opportunities of doing the work for which they are showing themselves to be thoroughly fitted, and we are giving them such opportunities alike in the morning and afternoon classes in the Central School, and in the evening classes in the Branch Schools. Here, perhaps, a word may be usefully said as to the sources whence we derive our students, and as to the divisions into which they naturally group themselves. As to class, they are drawn from all ranks in the community—the wealthier and the poorer, the professional, manufacturing, and trading classes, and the artisans. In one way or another, the schools are easily open to all these. In the morning classes at the Central School, where the students as a rule belong to families which are what is commonly called “well off,” we charge fees which are proportioned alike to the capacity of payment and to the cost of instruction. In the afternoon classes at the Central School, the fees are lower, to meet the claims of other classes of students who can attend in the daytime. In the evening classes at the Central School, chiefly filled by artisans, the charges are fixed at such a moderate amount as to offer no hindrance to any student who wishes to attend. In the Branch Schools, where as a rule the students are younger, and less able to pay, the fees are so low as to be almost nominal, and other advantages are conceded, which further reduce the cost to each boy or girl who enters for instruction. In all departments there exists a very generous scheme of free admissions. Every public elementary school in the



City, whether Board school or voluntary school, can send in a specified number of candidates for free admissions to the Branch Schools, and some hundreds of students, so admitted, are now taught in these schools. In the Central School there are a large number of free scholarships, founded by the munificence of the late Miss Ryland—some of them entrance scholarships, some of them advanced; and to these additions of importance have been made by other donors—for example, the Middlemore scholarships, and the valuable Wright scholarship, founded by those liberal benefactors of the school, the Messrs. Tangye. Taking all classes and values together, there are not far from 600 free scholarships in the various departments. Again, in the Central School, the charges for teaching are reduced by successes obtained at the Government examinations, so that in this way further encouragement is given to deserving students. And all these advantages, it should be understood, are open to all classes. A student from an elementary school may obtain free admission to one of our Branch Schools, may there compete for and obtain a free scholarship to the Central School, and once there, may compete for scholarships established in that school, up to the highest and most valuable. In this way the best and fullest Art instruction to be obtained is opened without restriction to all who desire to benefit by it. The scheme of free admissions links the elementary schools of the town with the Town Schools of Art; there are open chances for all; and to all there is offered the opportunity of an equal career.

When describing, a little while ago, the work conducted in Margaret Street, I mentioned the extension of the Central School, now in progress. This extension, when it



is completed, will afford the means of great and most important development. By placing more room at our disposal, it will permit of the admission of a much larger number of students from the Branch Schools into the Central School—the capacity of which will be nearly doubled—and it will enable us to teach many branches of Art, now necessarily excluded, or only partially taught, which have a direct and valuable bearing upon our local Art industries. In the report presented by the Committee to the City Council, on which the extension was authorised, some of these developments were mentioned. “Proper facilities,” the report said, “are most urgently required, for students to carry out their designs in the under-mentioned processes: in—

- (i.) Repoussé and kindred subjects, such as niello, chasing, etching, and engraving on metal, damascening, and filigree.
- (ii.) Enamelling, in Cloisonné, Champlevé, and Limoges.
- (iii.) Wood carving, wood engraving, needlework, terracotta, encaustic painting, the making of decorative cartoons, and working in fresco, tempera, sgraffito, &c.”

By this extension of the School we aim at a practical development of Art instruction which has long been in the minds, here and elsewhere, of those who are engaged in the direction of Schools of Art. We propose, in effect, and subject of course to certain altered conditions, to revive and apply the principles on which the finest decorative artists of the Gothic and Renaissance periods did their work—the union, that is, of designer and craftsman in one person. This was well expressed in a report presented to



the Committee in 1890 by Mr. Walter Crane, after his examination of the works of our students in that year's exhibition. Economic and industrial conditions, he pointed out, "have led to the severance and sub-division of the functions of the designer and the craftsman, of the artist and the workman," so that the latter "has not any artistic freedom in, or control of, his work as a whole." Consequently, he observed, "we have, as a result, when we seek design, and a measure of beauty, and suggestion, united with utility, on the one hand, a certain amount of artistic feeling, ineffective and unworkable owing to a too exclusive pictorial training, and ignorance of technical conditions; and, on the other, a mechanical repetition of worn-out ideas, and bad trade traditions in design, with a false superficial mechanical finish, more and more incongruous and conglomerate as the trade demands increase for 'new and original' designs every season; and the designer's pattern-book becomes more encyclopædic and cosmopolitan. The only possible way of counteracting the effects of this system in any degree is, along with the cultivation of a simpler and severer taste, to enable the designer to be, if not actually, at least *mentally*, the craftsman; also, that he should be thoroughly conversant with the peculiar necessities and limitations of the material in which the design is intended to be carried out. The only way to bring this about is, obviously, to put the designer in direct relation with tools and materials; and, as a suggestion, I should recommend that there should be workshops established in association with the School of Design, where students in design might familiarise themselves with methods and materials, and practise some of the simpler forms of the



handicrafts, such as repoussé metal work, wood and stone carving, sgraffito, mosaic, glass painting, wrought ironwork, and the like."

We intend to try to do this with greater fulness than has hitherto been possible. We have done it, as I have already indicated, to some extent. You may see examples in the School exhibition, which show that in our course of teaching the designer is, in some instances, familiar with the qualities of restriction and of adaptation of the material in which the design is to be executed. This is notable, particularly, in some of the specimens of repoussé and other decorative metal work, which have received marked approval from a metal workers' society, the Armourers' and Brasiers' Company of London, on whose behalf I shall presently have the pleasure of offering prizes awarded by them to our students, and gained in a competition open to the whole country. We shall persevere in the course I have indicated, preparatory to the advantage of the new building; and when we are in possession of ampler space and further means, I look forward with hope, indeed, with more than hope, with confidence, to the realisation in our own modern community of triumphs achieved by the artist craftsmen of mediæval times; triumphs to be achieved by the use of methods which they employed, and by a revival of the spirit in which they worked. There is no lack of skill amongst our workmen; cunning of hand, keenness of eye, desire of excellence, faculty of perception, power of expression. Given the opportunity, and they could do work as good, as beautiful, as noble in its higher qualities as any that has come down to us from the metal



workers, the enamellers, the jewellers, and the glass-painters of old. They need, as helps to this attainment, two things—the union of the faculty of design with knowledge of the material in which the design is to be executed—in other words, the training which, in our schools, we are endeavouring to give them. And in the second place, they need the appreciation of an instructed public, educated to care for and to desire fine work, putting a high value upon individuality as against the mechanical monotony of manufacture; and, freed from the influence of those twin demons, Competition and Cheapness, willing to pay the liberal price which all good and individual artistic work—whether pictorial or decorative—must of necessity receive.

As it is our task to train the artist craftsman, so it must be our task also to educate those for whom his work is to be produced. To some extent I hope, we are doing so already; and this brings me to another and extremely important branch of the work which is being conducted by the Museum and School of Art Committee. Of the influence which is exerted by our Art Gallery I need scarcely speak; of the millions of visitors who have passed through it since it was opened, or of the intelligent interest which great numbers of them have shown in the works included in our permanent collections, and in the singularly fine and varied special collections we have from time to time been enabled to bring together. As regards pictorial Art certainly no town in the kingdom—no provincial town—has had ampler means of Art instruction than have been, within the last five years, provided by the loan collections in the Birmingham Corporation Gallery; and no town, I think, could have



shown a keener appreciation of them, or have turned their advantages to better account. We are not, however, endeavouring to educate the public through our Art Gallery only. Thanks to the willing and intelligent co-operation of the School Board, we have been enabled to begin the Art education of the public in the elementary schools of the town. Our teachers, under the general guidance of our Head Master, supervise the drawing teaching throughout the Board schools, and thus render systematic and invaluable help to the masters of those schools actually engaged in the teaching of drawing. We have now, reckoning the additions newly made, fifty-two Board schools under our direction in this respect, and it is not too much to say—indeed, the results of the Government examinations show it—that we have lifted the quality of the drawing teaching in the Board schools in a most remarkable degree; a result which has been freely and generously acknowledged by the Board itself. And besides this supervision of the scholars, we take charge of the Art instruction of the pupil teachers, those who will be the school masters and mistresses of the future. At present, as to the scholars, we have only the boys to deal with. For some reason, which I fail to appreciate, the girls are not instructed in drawing. Yet, with both girls and boys, drawing ought to be as common and, within obvious limits, as easy as writing; and all the more so because there are few, if any subjects which afford more thorough mental discipline—the discipline of order, of accuracy of observation, of memory, of self-restraint, and of habitual training of hand and eye. Perhaps in time the girls also will come to





us, and then we shall have complete charge of the Art training of the Birmingham people of the future, for already we touch on the one hand the middle classes, through the pupils we receive from the High Schools and the Grammar Schools, and on the other hand our system widely reaches the pupils in the elementary schools, so that, in Art teaching, all sections are graded with and are influenced by the Municipal School of Art.

Broadly put, this is the work which the School of Art is doing in the town and for the town. Those of us who were concerned in the management of the old School of Art, and who, knowing its difficulties, and limitations, and defects, advocated its transfer to the Corporation, are now witnessing more than the fulfilment of our hopes and expectations. We looked for solid and rapid progress; but we never dreamed that in so short a time we should have advanced so far. Several causes have conduced to this great success. We have had good material to work upon in the students. We have had an able and devoted director in our Head Master, one who is capable of imparting his own enthusiasm to those who work under him, and associated with him we have had a singularly capable teaching staff, all the more valuable and the more satisfactory because the greater proportion of them—all the teachers in the Branch Schools, and many of those in the Central School—have been trained in our own classes, and are imbued with affection for the school, and with pride in its success. Of the Committee I will say nothing; ours is administrative work, which we are glad to do to the utmost of our power. But I should be seriously wanting in duty if I did not say, on behalf of the Committee and of the teachers, how deeply we are indebted



to the City Council for the generous confidence it has uniformly reposed in us, for its appreciation of our work, and for its willing and liberal compliance with the demands we have from time to time had to make upon it. We have asked for nothing that the Council has not readily given to us; and I need scarcely say that administration, however exacting and anxious it may be, becomes a pleasure when it is performed under such conditions. But, as a matter of justice to the School, I ought to say that we have been moderate, modest even, in our pecuniary requests. The cost of the school, on its present footing, and for its present work, imposes but a small charge upon the rates of the City. We spend for our whole work under £9,000 a year. We earn in Government grant about £2,500—that is our estimate for this year, and it is the largest grant earned in the three kingdoms—we receive nearly £2,000 in students' fees, the School Board pays the full cost of the supervision of its schools, and we have a considerable income from endowments and other sources. The net result is that our demand upon the rates is under £4,000—about a halfpenny in the pound, though it will rise to some extent when the enlarged Central School is in operation and when the new Branch Schools in the recently annexed districts of the City are in full work. For the amount just stated we are training 3,500 students in our own schools; we are directing the Art teaching of 20,000 boys in the Board schools; we are training in Art the pupil teachers under the School Board; and we are, in our own classes, educating all the teachers who will be required in Birmingham Schools of Art, however widely these may be ultimately extended. But may we not say that something more is being accomplished



than is capable of being expressed in a tangible form? Are we not gradually, but surely, bringing to bear a wholesome influence upon the town generally? If I am asked how, I say—by educating all classes in a knowledge and appreciation of Art: designers, workers, employers, purchasers. The influence is direct and indirect; the former by the teaching in the schools, which is carried thence into the designing rooms and the workshops; the latter in raising the standard of taste, and in the wider diffusion of a knowledge of what Art is, and of what it can do to brighten, to refine, and to elevate individual and communal life. The silent influence of Art schools and galleries reaches further than may at first sight appear. An instructed people, a new generation, who have passed under it, will finally refuse submission to the reign of sordid cheapness and self-repeating ugliness in their public monuments and buildings, in their streets, their homes, their personal ornaments, their dress, and their industrial productions. They may not, as was Athens in its noblest days, become suffused with Art; our northern clime and our more secluded habits forbid the reproduction of the life or the Art of an out-door people under the sunnier skies of Greece. But, resuming the bent of our own national genius, and emulating the works of our own countrymen in by-gone days, we may revive the spirit and repeat the triumphs of those who, beneath the clouds and snows of England, reared churches and palaces worthy of record amongst the glories of the world; whose dwellings, in manor house, and in town street, were perfect in their grace and stateliness; and whose workers—masters of the hammer, the forge, and the



chisel—created in iron and brass, in glass and jewels, in gold and silver, examples of craftsmanship worthy to stand in the presence chambers of princes, and to be kept in the treasuries of kings.

This is the ideal I should like to put and to keep before the students of our School of Art. That many of them are striving to attain it is evident alike from the number and the nature of the awards which the School obtained in the Government examinations last year, especially those in the National Competition. A gold medal, six silver medals, eleven bronze medals, and thirty-one National book prizes, constitute no mean testimony to the efficiency of the instruction given in the school, to the earnestness and intelligence of the students, and to the quality of their work. Taken altogether, the school stands first in the number of its awards—higher than any other school in connection with the Department of Science and Art. That is a great thing for us; a great distinction, and also a great responsibility, for we have to keep and even to improve the position we have attained. But valuable and encouraging as this official testimony is, it is not everything. We have to look to other tests in order justly to estimate the position and prospects of the school. Our annual exhibition offers one such test, for there we can see and judge the collective work of the students, we can compare class with class, and year with year; we can learn in what respects our excellence consists, and we can recognise the departments in which we are defective. On the whole, judging of the exhibition fairly, not as a collection of finished works, but as illustrating what the students are doing in the ordinary work of the school, we have reason to



be well satisfied. It is unquestionably the best display we have ever had, best in performance, fullest of promise. There is, in all the departments, evidence of the attainment of a high degree of technical skill; and in some of them there are striking manifestations of marked individuality, alike in design and in execution. Students are marking out new lines for themselves, and thus are showing that they are able to turn to good account the teaching they have received. Our chief examiner, Mr. Wainwright, whose eminence as an artist, and whose familiarity with Birmingham industries, lend especial value to his opinion, makes in his report to the Committee an observation on this point which is entitled to grave consideration. Many of the students, he says—he is speaking mainly of technical skill and of the faculty of design—have attained such a position that their future is now in their own hands. To put it in another way, they have so thoroughly acquired the means of expression, that we may now fairly expect them to show what is in them in regard to creative power as exhibited in the production of works of Decorative Art. I lay stress upon these words, “Decorative Art,” because this is the direction in which we are endeavouring specially to train our students. It is not our aim to produce artists in the common, the popular, and the mistakenly restricted sense of the word—that is, painters of pictures, whether of figure subjects or landscapes. These will emerge sometimes from the ranks of School of Art students. They have done so in the past. Mr. Wainwright was once a student in our school, so was Mr. Langley, so were others who have reached distinction as painters; and there are students now in our classes who will follow these examples, and will confer honour upon the school and



the town, while attaining honour for themselves. These, however, must of necessity be rare exceptions, and it is not to be regretted that they should be so, for, as Mr. Holman Hunt observes in a letter addressed to our Secretary, Mr. Hytch, it is not desirable that students of a School of Art should be encouraged in a too common tendency to "start as finished masters;" and he further observes that, had he been able to be here this evening, he should have felt it his duty to express a strong warning against the dangerous influence of this disposition on the part of too many students. He is quite right and wise in giving this hint of warning, for students in such schools as ours must and should belong mainly to three broadly marked out classes. First, those who are to be designers and executant operatives in the factories and workshops of the town. Second, those who intend to devote themselves chiefly to the design and execution of works of Decorative Art. Third, and this must always be a large class, those who, not intending to turn their studies to occupations resulting in pecuniary profit for themselves, may usefully apply them to home use in the way of house decoration, to the cultivation of a high standard of personal taste, and to bringing to bear their own acquirements upon the taste, and extending the Art knowledge, of those with whom, in the home or in society they are directly associated. As to the first of these classes their work, in its character and its limitations, defines itself; it is to be guided in its application by the requirements of the occupations they respectively pursue. To the second class—that of decorators—there is open a wide and varied field: such as the



production of designs capable of being produced by manufacturers; engraving, on wood or metal, whether for book illustration or upon articles of ornament; surface decoration, in wall papers, textile hangings, or embroideries; and the direct personal application of decorative Art in regard to houses and public buildings. Here there is ample scope for the reduction to practice, and the exemplification, of the principles and methods taught in the schools. And while referring to this matter I should like to make one practical suggestion—namely, that the City Council should give us the opportunity of designing and executing decorations, suitable for the vacant panels left for such a purpose in our Town Hall; and, further, I should like to see some of our principal firms of house decorators associating with themselves selected groups of our more highly trained and competent students, and entrusting them with the task of designing the decorations of houses upon some intelligent and harmonious scheme, adapted to the conditions of each particular case, and enabling them to aid in the direct execution of the finer and more delicate portions of such designs. I know that our system of tenancy hinders the thoroughly good and artistic decoration of houses; but, especially in the better-class suburbs, there are now a great many house owners, either freehold or for long terms of years, and many of these, who are persons of instructed taste, must be weary of the ordinary, monotonous, commonplace treatment of the rooms in which they pass so great a portion of their home-life. Will not some of them give our best students a chance, and so not only help the School of Art in its work, but procure for themselves new sources of permanent enjoyment? The third class to which I have



referred can find so much to do in their own homes that I need not now dwell upon the varied opportunities which are open to them. Some day, if occasion offers, I should like to say something to selected students in the School itself, on the points which I am now able only to touch in this general manner. But there is one thing which, in conclusion, I wish to say to the students as a whole—to all the three classes I have indicated; and also, if they will permit, to the masters and other teachers as well. I desire very strongly to impress upon all who have to do with the School the importance—as I think the essential importance—of combining with Art training a large and liberal measure of literary culture. This applies to all students—to designers and artisans, to decorators, and to those who are simply acquiring personal accomplishments. All Art students and Art workers ought to read—not casually or aimlessly, or merely discursively, but with order, regularity, and methodical intention. They cannot, I think, develop fertility, variety, and fulness of imagination in the conception of design, or accuracy and harmony of selection, or vigour and refinement of executive treatment, without literary culture, to store the mind with the knowledge which begets ideas, to widen the scope and range of the work, to keep it within harmonious lines of arrangement, to strengthen it, and to inspire it with life. A great genius, perhaps, may be able to dispense with such aids to invention, or may with effort, or by happy accident, break through the bonds of ignorance; though I think that even a great genius would be all the better, more fertile, and more vigorous, through the acquisition of the widest available literary culture. But



we are not all endowed with the mysterious indefinable quality or faculty which we call genius, and therefore the greater part of us cannot afford to neglect whatever aids may be open to us; and first amongst these I place a wide and thorough knowledge of literature, and especially of the literature of our own country and language. It would be hopeless here to attempt even to sketch the range of desirable reading—that must be matter of detailed examination elsewhere, and must, to a considerable extent, be determined by personal preferences, and by the requirements of particular lines of study and of intended occupation.

But speaking broadly, it seems to me that those who are being trained in the arts of design, whether for industrial or decorative purposes, should direct their reading to works of imagination—to the best poets and the standard novelists and dramatists; to works of natural history in all its branches, animal, horticultural, floral, and physical; to books of travel; to carefully-selected biographies and historical works; and to the best treatises on the developments of Art, pictorial, architectural, and decorative, of all ages and of all national styles. Such studies would be found to tell immediately, solidly, and most helpfully, upon the work of the artist, whatever his grade or whatever the branch of Art the bent of his disposition, or the requirements of his occupation in life, might lead him to practise. Of the self-evident beneficial influence of such studies upon personal character and conduct, upon mental development, upon the elevation of associated and private life, I need say nothing; all who read largely and wisely know for themselves the inestimable and enduring blessings which such reading confers upon them. Happily, the means



of pursuing these literary studies are now within the reach of every one who chooses to use them. In the School itself we have a fairly good library of books of reference in Art—a collection which, when we are in possession of the new building, we hope largely to extend; and to this I should be glad to see a lending library of considerable capacity added; perhaps with a smaller selection of lending books for the Branch Schools. This would not be a novelty, for thirty years ago there was a lending library connected with the old school in New Street, and it was much used and highly valued both by masters and students. Then, in our great Reference Library we have a collection of books on Art subjects, and in general literature, which is unsurpassed, and perhaps unequalled, in the provinces; and in our town lending libraries we have ample and well-varied stores of general literature. But, of the principal classes of books I have indicated, I should like to see well selected examples in the hands of students as their own personal possessions. Happily, this also is within easy reach. One great distinction of our age is the wide diffusion and the cheapness of good literature. The master-pieces of the world, of all ages and all countries, are translated into our own tongue; the treasures of classic literature lie open to the humblest student, though he may have no knowledge of the languages of Greece or Rome. Our own English classics, as varied, as attractive, as noble, as any that have enriched the world, are accessible to all ranks of our people, at an outlay which practically excludes none who seek to pass through the portal of the Temple of Knowledge. To go no further than the Poets: for a few shillings a workman may put upon his own shelves



readable editions of Shakespeare, of Spenser, of Milton, of Dryden, of Pope, of Tennyson, and of Morris. For a few pounds he may add the chief works of our historians, our novelists, our essayists, and our naturalists. Thus he may form a library, which can be studied at leisure, and enjoyed with that precious aid to profitable study, the sense of absolute possession. Surely it is worth some sacrifice to obtain an advantage so priceless. Surely, not a few of our students, hitherto too careless of literature, will make the sacrifice, and by making it, and by using the golden key it will put into their hands, will enter upon a new world, from whose treasure houses they may at pleasure draw strength, and help, and encouragement for the daily work of the world in which they have to spend their lives.

Now I have kept you long enough, and with this counsel, than which I can offer none more profitable or practical, I pass to the more agreeable business of this evening, the distribution of prizes to a long list of students, who have won honour and distinction for their School, their teachers, and themselves.

